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ABSTRACT

Immediate and concentrated effort is required to secure adequate appropriations to maintain existing library programs and to extend library services to even greater numbers of users. Though President Ford seems unreceptive, the Congress has shown itself amenable to lobbying efforts on behalf of the nation's libraries. Lobbying should begin with the American Library Association's (ALA) representatives in Washington, and those efforts should be reinforced by letters from the ALA membership aimed at congressmen and legislative staff. Additional persuasion can be acquired by enlisting the support of civic groups, educational organizations, and labor unions. (EMH)

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"HOW LIBRARIES CAN PLAY POWER POLITICS at the national, state, and local levels"

This is an edited transcript of the program cooperatively planned by the National Library Week Committee of the Wisconsin Library Association, the Library Development and Legislation Committee of WLA, and the University of Wisconsin-Extension Communication Programs and transmitted via the Educational Telephone Network (ETN) from Radio Hall on the Madison, Wisconsin, campus on February 5.

Participants:

Muriel Fuller, Professor, Communication Programs, UW-Extension (Moderator)
Beverly Brager, Chairman, WLA-NLW Committee
Germaine Krettek, former Director, Washington Office of the American Library Association
Anthony Earl, former Wisconsin state legislator, Secretary, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
Mrs. Walter Fitch, Legislative Coordinator, Wisconsin League of Women Voters
Nancy Burke, Chairman, WLA-LD and L Committee
Wayne Bassett, President, WLA

Brager: The theme for National Library Week in Wisconsin is "The bastions of freedom depend as much on strong libraries as on strong armies." We feel that to have strong libraries we must have strong support. And to acquire this support, librarians, trustees, and library users must become involved in telling the library story to the people who have the power. This workshop has been organized to assist you in developing effective skills for communicating with your public and your government officials on all the levels.

We are fortunate to have knowledgeable persons to speak on the subject; they have all had practical experience.

Krettek: Power is the name of the game in our nation's Capitol, and it behooves us to exert as much library power as possible or forget our long expressed belief that libraries are a national resource which advance national goals and thus are entitled to federal as well as state and local support. To speak up effectively in Washington is not easy, especially when you don't have unlimited resources. Let's consider what needs to be done and can be done with the means available to us.

Immediate and concentrated action is necessary to secure adequate appropriations for existing library programs and the enactment of bills to extend the Library Services and Construction Act and the Higher Education Act in this second session of the 94th Congress. Our long-range objective is to foster greater understanding of the essentiality of libraries in the future of our nation and the necessity of a realistic and consistent level of support. A White House Conference on libraries could mobilize such citizen understanding and support.

IR 003 285

US DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH EDUCATION & WELFARE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

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Over the years we've had great successes. Authorization levels for library programs are sizable, so we know we're done something right. But we also suffered setbacks. Appropriations rarely equal authorizations. In the main these failures are the result of circumstances over which we have little or no control. Nevertheless we can't accept the status quo passively or we will get the reputation of being soft, of being losers.

In Washington today, unfortunately, we are faced with a hostile, or at least an indifferent administration. President Ford is not an enthusiastic supporter of library legislation or funding, and this attitude is reflected throughout the government agencies that administer and make funding recommendations concerning library programs.

Congress is a different matter. There is a tremendous reservoir of goodwill toward libraries in both the House of Representatives and the Senate, and these elected members together represent all the people of the United States. But goodwill is not enough; what is needed is active, vocal, consistent support of library measures and appropriations. Support by the power structure in Congress is essential--the leadership of both the majority and minority parties and the key committee chairmen, long-term Congressmen, who wield great power and represent both large cities and rural areas.

As a profession, we are fond of saying, "Libraries are for everyone." If so, why isn't every Congressman a library supporter? Why isn't every citizen pushing for better library service? Why do so few people use libraries? No one will openly admit he is against libraries; he is just against paying taxes for them. We must learn from the people what they want from their libraries and then tell the library story with force, imagination, and human interest. Budget and circulation statistics alone won't do. Our primary job is to show John Q. Citizen and his elected Representatives that the taxes he spends for libraries will benefit him, his family, his job, his community, and his country. If enough voters are convinced and will tell their members of Congress and the Administration, we will get our fair share of the tax dollar. Our aim must be to get each level of government to assume its fair share of funds for quality library programs.

Do you have the facts assembled in form to appeal to all these various publics? I assume all of you here today and listening on this network are committed to an all-out lobbying effort not for just today and tomorrow, but for the long pull, and that, in addition, all of you librarians, trustees, and Friends of Libraries are united in your objectives. This is the first requirement for success in power politics. In public, you must speak as one voice. A prime example of the truth of this statement, "In Unity there is Strength," is the effectiveness of the Committee for Full Funding of Education Programs in getting increased appropriations over the budget figures. This committee, a loose coalition of some 80 educational organizations, including the American Library Association, has been successful on Capitol Hill because it has worked together instead of at cross purposes. Its cause is good and appealing to Congress

as a whole. The Washington representatives of the coalition organizations are astute, experienced, and dedicated, and have strong support in the field. By assisting the full funding committee in Washington to continue and by working with the constituent groups in your state, you can broaden your base of support and understanding for library programs as the basic element in total education.

President Ford's budget for fiscal year 1977 is disasterous for all libraries. The LSCA expires this fiscal year. Authorization needs to be renewed. The HEA authorization likewise requires renewal in this Congress. Funds are needed if there is to be a White House Conference on Libraries and Information Science. It is a dismaying outlook, but we have some formidable assets if we use them to advantage.

ALA's Washington office with its experienced, skilled, but overworked staff is the greatest asset the profession has at the national level in terms of political power. Its director, Eileen Cooke, is respected, admired, and listened to. Keep in close touch with this invaluable resource. Make the Washington office your first line of communication. Use the information it can provide on timing and status of legislation. Read the ALA Washington Newsletter carefully and promptly. Back its calls to action to the HILT. Provide input on attitudes of Wisconsin Congressmen. The Washington representative cannot be expected to know all members of Congress and must depend on associates in the field to help with those members who have special importance on particular bills. See that funds are available so that one or more Wisconsin library representatives can go to Washington to help in a legislative or an appropriation crisis. Such on-the-scene representation, however, must be backed up by evidence of wide support from the home front. Not only must your Friends of the Library be enlisted as grass-roots voices but other groups with similar interests should be also. Library allies can include educational and vocational organizations, labor unions, service clubs, women's organizations, etc.

I cannot stress too much the importance of letters that are personal, brief, timely, factual. Where possible, give dramatic and compelling examples of the impact of libraries upon the lives of people to be truly effective and certain of being read by the Congressman himself. Written communications should be based on personal acquaintance developed while the member was at home in the district. If you don't know your Congressman, make this your first order of business. Don't be afraid. Don't give up. Remember, he is your Representative. Patience, persistance, sound information, and commendation when you can will pay off eventually. Get to know your own Representative and your two Senators on a first-name basis if possible. Find out where they listen to at home. Find a way to get to these individuals or groups with the library story. Sometimes this is the Governor, a friend of the Legislature, the president of the Rotary Club in his home town, or an individual who stays in the background but is immensely influential. Don't overlook the congressional aides and committee staff who have an important role in determining the outcome of a legislative effort even though they, too, work in the background. And while we are discussing who influences whom, let's not forget that some Congressmen are more powerful than others and that we need to work with them more carefully and assiduously.

In your state, concentrate first on Appropriations Committee members. Progress and Okay, House Education and Labor Committee members to Pucinski and Cornell, and Senate Labor and Public Welfare member Nelson. [illegible] work on the rest of your Wisconsin state delegation, etc., to furnish, (or be persuaded to intercede with the above-mentioned key colleagues). And don't forget Melvin Laird. He is still a power to contend with and has great influence on President Ford. And, remember, while he was in the House of Representatives, he often balked at anti-library appropriations. At every opportunity, emphasize that we aren't working for Presidential gain for ourselves but for the public's right to know. And this requires good libraries freely available to all.

This is a great time to play power politics. Good I remind you that this is an election year! All 435 Representatives and 1/3 of the Senators are up for election, and, of course, the President must be chosen. [illegible] opportunities for meeting those up for reelection and those seeking national office will be many in the weeks ahead. Make sure an articulate, well informed library spokesman, not necessarily a librarian, is at events rally of both political parties and is prepared with the carefully positioned question about his position on library appropriations, extension of ESEA, the Higher Education Act, the White House Conference on Libraries.

Remember, you have a right to talk to your own elected officials, and you, too, are working in the public interest. If you are really interested in a particular candidate, have you considered doing some volunteer work as an individual voter on his campaign? Even help stuffing envelopes or manning the phone at headquarters will be welcome. You'll gain to some useful political insight. Particularly in a get-out-the-vote campaign for the primaries as well as the November election.

Another good way to gain attention and political power is to secure a vote or at least a cutting in each party's political platform. ALA's Legislative Committee is already working toward this at the national level.

If at all possible, get involved as an individual or a group. [illegible] for yourself how the system works. It takes time and energy but it's fascinating and crucial to a democracy. If we are to have good government and good libraries, we must have successful legislative activities. Political power is real. It is obtainable. Let's work for it. [illegible] can't afford not to.

Fuller: I'm glad that you mentioned the fact that the administrative problems in the Washington offices are very important in helping their Congressmen and Senators understand the situation back home. In my initial experiences I've been most impressed by the administrative problem working which our Congressmen from Wisconsin and with our Senators, so I'm glad that's [illegible] toward that point, but I'm curious about whether it is possible to convert these people as well as the Congressmen or is it just an [illegible] sort of thing that happens?

Andrews: Please write directly to the Commissioner. If at all possible, try to talk to him personally to write to him and ask him to speak to [illegible] personally to write to him and ask him to speak to [illegible] public support, information or [illegible]. Congressmen have difficult to reach home rooms. The person who owns the office is a good person to get to know. And when you go to Washington, you ought to get acquainted with the legislative aides and that sometimes you can get to speak with them directly.

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Carr: I've been asked to discuss with you how [illegible] the efforts on the state level, and how they may influence the participation of the state government level here in Montana. I'd like to break that discussion into two parts:

First, how awards you about to contact when you try to influence state policy and, secondly, how I would suggest that you go about it.

In terms of who should be influenced, I think that there are several agencies that must be influenced. The first, of course, is the Governor. The second has to do with the [illegible] the Legislature, the Legislature is [illegible] and the Department of Public Instruction. And, finally, legislators themselves, there as individuals that as a collective group.

Let me go through those one at a time. The Governor is clearly the principal policy maker in state politics and, regardless of what you think of the abilities or in the structure of office [illegible] the Governor has the capacity that any budget which is proposed by the Governor is the most significant piece of policy that is adopted and often goes to state government every two years. The budget as the principal policy document is the place to start in terms of any group of any individual interested in influencing the outcome of state policy.

The Governor's budget proposal is developed within an environment which takes into consideration his own personal philosophy and as it is influenced by the state's economic condition and other factors. So it is important that the Governor himself and the Governor's [illegible] staff of advisors be made aware of the concerns of people in this area. Those who are responsible [illegible] the preparation of [illegible] as individuals or [illegible] as the state level. The Governor's [illegible] are primarily in the budget-making process in that budget must [illegible] to budgeting, the Bureau of Administration. The Administrator of Administration is put in some people's [illegible] as if further budget analysts who develop policies [illegible] that often [illegible] the Governor for [illegible]. The budget analysts are [illegible]. They are people who are writing [illegible] to other people's points of view, and I think that it's important that people who are interested in influencing the development of policy [illegible] policy decisions [illegible] the Department of Administration who have been given specific [illegible] responsibilities for developing this part of the budget. In this particular case, [illegible] Governor and Governor-elect

[illegible]